

THE RETURN OF THE EVIL DEAD

STACK met with *Evil Dead* star Bruce Campbell and producer Rob Tapert to discuss the continuation of the horror cult classic in the new series *Ash vs. Evil Dead*. Words Scott Hocking

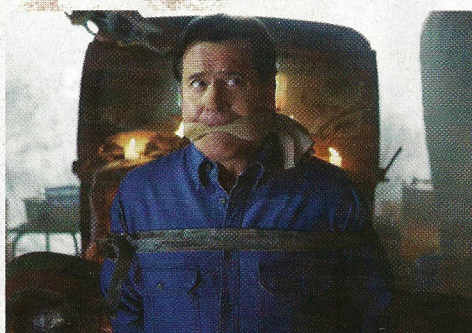
Not counting a groovy post-credits cameo in the 2013 *Evil Dead* remake, it's been 25 years since we last saw Ash Williams (Bruce Campbell) fighting the Deadites in *Army of Darkness*. Now he's back on our screens – older but not necessarily wiser, chunkier but still lethal with a chainsaw and a “boom-stick” – in the new 10-part TV series *Ash vs. Evil Dead*, which faithfully captures (and ups) all the madness, mayhem and splatstick of Sam Raimi's beloved film trilogy.

“Sam was writing a new *Evil Dead* movie and Rob Tapert and I didn't think that was realistic,” says Campbell of the series' move to television. “Sam makes very expensive movies now. Do we need an *Evil Dead* movie that costs \$100 million? I don't think so.”

“We got Sam to direct the pilot, which gave us a lot of street cred, and it gave the other directors a bar that they had to reach. So we were grateful for Sam to come in and do that, ‘cause he's a busy guy.”

According to Rob Tapert, it was plans for a follow-up to the 2013 movie remake that led to the continuation of Ash's adventures as a television series.

“We were talking to the head of the studio and he said, ‘you guys shouldn't do a sequel, you should do a TV show’. Someone else, besides me, saying that to Sam planted the seed, and over time I kept harping away,” Tapert



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recalls. “Bruce wanted to do it as a TV show, and so having Bruce, Sam and his vision made it easier to make that transition and for the fans to accept it. I don't think we could have done this as a TV show without Bruce playing the character of Ash. When we did the remake of *Evil Dead*, we didn't want to recast the character – he's such an iconic figure.”

The series finds Ash living a reclusive life in a trailer park and working as a stock boy, after returning to the present following the events of *Army of Darkness*. But it isn't long before his mundane life is

rudely interrupted by the return of the *Evil Dead*, who are accidentally unleashed from the Necronomicon.

“He's very flawed now,” says Campbell of the middle-aged incarnation of this cult hero. “I like that. He still fancies himself as a ladies' man, even though those days are gone, but it's still fun to carry on that bravado. Ash is still making

bad and rash decisions; he always thinks he has it all figured out but he makes all these horrible mistakes. They don't let heroes make mistakes in big movies. Iron Man and all those guys aren't going to screw up like Ash, and I think that humanises him.”

Campbell stresses that *Ash vs. Evil Dead* isn't a reinvention of the movie trilogy; it's an expansion and continuation of Ash's story. “That's the fun thing about doing television, you can develop a character over a long period of time,” he explains. “In the movies Ash probably has about fifteen lines of dialogue, but on TV he trash-talks his face off and we get to know him better.” ☺

• *Ash vs. Evil Dead: Season 1* is out on Oct 26

HORROR MOVIE, RIGHT THERE ON MY TV



The Exorcist (2016)

Transforming the greatest horror film of all time into a TV series sounds like blasphemy, but the producers insist it's an addition to the franchise, not a reimagination.



Damien (2016)

Set 25 years after the events of *The Omen*, the eponymous Antichrist is now a young man confronting his unholy nature. The show was cancelled after just one season, which is definitely a bad omen.



From Dusk Till Dawn (2014-2016)

After rehashing the events of the Robert Rodriguez/Tarantino film for five episodes, this series settles into a new groove that further explores the origins of the Mexican vampire cult.



Friday the 13th (1987-1990)

Jason and his hockey mask are nowhere to be found in this “in-name-only” series that involves an antiques shop full of cursed objects. David Cronenberg even directed an episode.